Investigating the Entrepreneur Profile

Success Indicator

You will be able to define and explain what an entrepreneur is and interpret from information provided what makes a person an entrepreneur.

Life Skills Practiced

Learning to Learn; Interpreting Information

Project Skills Practiced

Explain what an entrepreneur is.

Introduction

An **entrepreneur*** is a person who takes the **risk** to start and run a business. Entrepreneurs discover and create new **products** and **services** and bring them to the market. They find new ways to use and market things already available. These individuals may create a new technology or other types of innovation. They often seek better and faster ways to do things. They create jobs for people in the community and contribute to economic growth. Entrepreneurs generate energy, initiative and a sense of progress within a community. They often give something back to their community.

Activity: Investigating the Entrepreneur Profile

In this activity you will discover what an entrepreneur is and what makes a person an entrepreneur through reading and analyzing stories about entrepreneurs. By analyzing the story about the inventor of Kool-Aid®, you will develop skills in interpreting information and in becoming a lifelong learner.

Activity Instructions for Learner

Read the story about Edwin Perkins, the inventor of Kool-Aid. After reading the story, answer the questions that follow.

*See glossary page 11.2 for definitions of words in bold type.

Kool Kool-Aid®

Factoids

Kool-Aid Man was introduced in 1975 by adding arms and legs to "Pitcher Man."

Kool-Aid inventor Edwin Perkins' favorite flavor was raspberry.

Kids of all ages worldwide drink more than 500 million gallons of Kool-Aid each year.

Perkins was one of 10 children, eight of whom lived to adulthood. As a child, Perkins was fascinated with a new dessert, "Jell-O®," and persuaded his father to carry it in the family's general store. For the rest of his life, Perkins talked about how Jell-O influenced his decision to get into the prepackaged food business.

The smiling Kool-Aid pitcher was designed by Marvin Potts, a New York ad agency art director, who was asked to illustrate the ad slogan, "A five-cent package makes two quarts." Apparently inspired by his son drawing on a frosty window pane, he created three different pitcher designs: one had 5 cents drawn in the frost, one had a heart and arrow and one had the smiling face.

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E-Ship Clue

Learn more about entrepreneurship. Research and read stories of success and failure.

EDWIN PERKINS

The Inventor of Kool-Aid®

Edwin Perkins was born on January 8, 1889, in Lewis, Iowa. He and his family moved to a farm in Furnas County, Nebraska, in 1893, and in 1900 moved to the town of Hendley, Nebraska.

Perkins started making extracts and medicines when he was 12 years old using instructions from a mail-ordered product advertised as "Be a manufacturer — Mixer's Guide tells how — write today."

During the four years after Perkins graduated from high school, he was the village postmaster, did printing, published a weekly paper and set up a mail order business to sell products that he made from his chemical set. The products included perfumes and bluing (a laundry whitener) that he sold under the name, Perkins Products Co. He also invented and marketed "Nix-O-Tine Tobacco Remedy," which was popular with WWI vets who had picked up the tobacco habit during the war and were trying to quit.

In 1920 Perkins moved to Hastings, Nebraska, to be nearer railroads and highways, which made it easier to distribute his products. Perkins Products manufactured and sold more than 125 different products. They ranged from face creams and lotions, medicines, salves and soaps to food flavorings, jelly-making products and fruit drink concentrates. Perkins recruited salespeople and managers for door-to-door sales of his products with postcards advertising "Earn $10 a Day," posters saying, "I Want You to Be My District Manager" and incentives such as new automobiles.

One of the most popular items was a product called Fruit Smack, a 4-ounce liquid fruit-flavored concentrate that could make a pitcher of fruit drink for pennies. The problem with Fruit Smack was that it came in glass containers, which were susceptible to breakage and had high shipping costs.

In 1927 in Hastings, Perkins invented Kool-Aid to overcome these problems. Kool-Aid (which originally was called Kool-Ade) was a powder that was lightweight, packaged in envelopes and sold in grocery stores instead of door-to-door. It came in six flavors: raspberry, cherry, grape, lemon, orange and root beer. The packaging presented a problem — one type of packaging left black, tarry material in the powder and another didn't seal properly. Perkins came up with a soft waxed paper liner and an outer envelope in bright colors that he designed and printed himself. Kool-Aid was the first powdered soft drink mix to be sold nationally in stores.

By 1931 Kool-Aid was so popular that Perkins Products Co. stopped selling all its other products to concentrate on Kool-Aid manufacturing and marketing. In the same year, the company moved to Chicago because Chicago had more efficient distribution points, was closer to suppliers and could better enable future business expansion. In 1953, Perkins Products Co. was sold to General Mills (which later was acquired by Kraft Foods).

Perkins died in 1961 in Rochester, Minnesota, and is buried in Hastings, where Kool-Aid was invented. Perkins and his wife Kitty contributed money to various Hastings organizations when they were alive and after their deaths through foundations that they set up.

Kool-Aid is the official soft drink of the state of Nebraska.

Hastings Museum of Natural and Cultural History (*www.hastingsmuseum.org/koolaid/index.htm.*)

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